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RAIL TRAVEL newsletter

25¢

VOL. 3 NO. 1
JANUARY 1, 1973

#51

1973 THE SHRINKING OF AMTRAK ?

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RAILROAD PASSENGERS
417 New Jersey Avenue, S.E., Washington DC 20003

Yes, I want to aid the cause of better rail passenger service. I understand I will receive a membership card and a monthly newsletter to keep me informed of developments.

Enclosed is my remittance for the category checked. I understand that $3.00 of this amount is for a one-year subscription to the newsletter.

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LETTERS

You must have had many letters and reports about crowded train conditions over the holidays, but I would like to add to them. On a trip from Alexandria, VA to Miami on the SILVER METEOR (Dec. 8-9) and returning on the first VACATIONER (Dec. 15-16), the trains were full to capacity, but had no problems accommodating everyone. However, during the holidays, observations of the GEORGE WASHINGTON (Prince, WV to Washington, DC), the SILVER STAR southbound from Washington, and the CHAMPION (Alexandria to Rocky Mount, NC) found people standing, sitting, or lying in aisles and restroom lounges. The club and snack lounges were filled with people having their "reserved" seats there.

For our CHAMPION trip to Rocky Mount, we were accommodated in a Penn Central club car. We were comfortable, though, and the trip was pleasant. Almost everyone encountered on the above trains seemed not to mind the crowding nor the late arrivals. Maybe it was just the holiday spirit.

Adron F. Hall

Alexandria, Va.

One train that seems to be having its timekeeping problems is the NATIONAL LTD.--more often than not at least one hour late eastbound, from my observations. On Saturday Dec. 16 passengers connected with the 3:30 METROLINER out of N.Y. at North Philadelphia rather than the scheduled 11:30. But that day it had apparently run into that bad ice storm in Missouri.

I rode the first section of the SOUTHERN CRESCENT from 30th St., Philadelphia, to N.Y. on Dec. 30. It left 45 mins late (the second section, with the thru equipment, was just a few minutes behind it) and had 13 coaches, pretty well filled. It moved

(Continued on page 15)

Rail Travel Newsletter, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Whole No. 51), January 1, 1973. Published twice monthly, on the first and third Mondays, by Message Media, P. O. Box 9007, Berkeley, California 94709. Subscription $6.00 per year, single copy 25¢. STAFF: James Russell, Editor; Paul Rayton, Editor-at-Large; Doug Ellis, Staff Photographer.

EDITORIAL
FOXES IN CHARGE OF CHICKENS

The National Association of Railroad Passengers was right. So many times did they reiterate that the Nixon administration and its advisers from the railroads and other big business are out to kill passenger train service by setting up Amtrak and then cutting it off, that it began to sound as if the Association was merely "crying Wolf."

Now, with the events of the past days, it is crystal clear that NARP had psyched out the Administration's motives precisely. With the announcement that the Office of Management and Budget will hold Amtrak's funding for the next fiscal year to as little as $50 million, well below the amounts appropriated for the corporation's beginning two years, it is clearly evident that the White House and its arm, OMB, are set to eliminate rail travel in this nation. The announcement followed closely upon the word that OMB would also withhold $9.1 million voted by Congress for the Mexican and San Joaquin Valley service.

This plan on the part of the Administration is nothing short of outrageous. Who is opposed to passenger train service in the U.S.? The people? Certainly not, when they have demonstrated an acceptance of restored train service far beyond the expectations of all seers. The Harris survey made for Amtrak showed additionally that an astounding 82% of the 3000 individuals scientifically polled believed that the public should have the option of rail service. Further, it is well known that Amtrak does not advertise some of its trains, such as the COAST STARLIGHT, since the response would be so overwhelming that Amtrak would not have enough equipment to handle the demand. Last summer, reports show that Amtrak lost probably more business than it gained by the inability of its flooded reservations offices to cope with demand.

Then who does oppose passenger train service? Let us quote from a letter to Amtrak President Roger Lewis from NARP member John A. Mills of Arkansas: "For those of us who have followed closely Amtrak and the legislative process to establish Amtrak, it is quite apparent who Amtrak's friends are as well as its enemies. The current session of Congress holds the key to Amtrak's future. I hope that you as President of Amtrak will line up on the side of those of us who want and see the urgent need of rail passenger service, not only in the corridors, but nationwide. You can rest assured that such men as Mr. B. F. Biaggini, Downing B. Jenks, William H. Moore and other railroad presidents have their guns all set and will continue their efforts to make Amtrak a failure and increase their efforts in this direction. In view of (OMB Director) Mr. Caspar Weinberger's close relationship with the Southern Pacific Lines and the railroad's known hatred for passenger trains, it will be a battle to get any expansion of Amtrak service either in California or on the Cotton Belt (an SP 90%-owned subsidiary) through Texas to Dallas, or anywhere else."

But perhaps equally as important as the influence of big railroad men is the White House's seemingly blind insistence on cutting the national budget at all costs. The cuts, however, are made frequently in the wrong places. The public is lead to believe that defense spending will be reduced, for example, but in actuality the Pentagon's budget calls for an increase of more than $5 billion in the same year that a little over $100 million for a socially desirable service

is deemed as too great.

To make matters worse, President Nixon is setting up machinery to control the national budget without regard to the checks and balances of other governmental divisions. Many observers, including ourselves, believe that practices of the OMB and the "superagencies" that Nixon is trying to create without the consent of Congress are unconstitutional. The New York Times editorialized (Jan. 11) that "... the Administration has no intention to take either Congress or the American people into its confidence on matters of the gravest importance to the nation's official course and personal conscience" and that "Such a doctrine of Presidential power violates the very principle of constitutional government."

The White House seems out of contact with the American people and their real pressing needs. New York Times columnist Tom Wicker (Jan. 11) characterized the President as a "withdrawn and untouchable man, who holds no news conferences, forbids elected members of Congress to question him..., and who now rejects even the twentieth century custom of delivering personally his State of the Union message." By his own admission, Nixon avoids watching TV news and commentators, getting his news instead from his own staff summary which "gives all sides." Worse, Nixon has launched an unprecedented attack upon the media. Reporters are being jailed for refusing to reveal confidential information. The Public Broadcasting Service is seeing a move to control its noncommercial TV programs. The White House Office of Telecommunications Policy is attempting to assert new controls over broadcasters. These all sound like things that happen in dictatorships far across the seas. Would we even recognize their ominous ring in this enlightened democracy where such events don't occur?

Congress and the White House are clearly on a collision course over the President's grabbing of power rightfully belonging to Congress, and especially over the issue of White House impounding of funds voted by Congress for various purposes (it so happened that the impounding of money for Amtrak was one of the first items mentioned in the new year that set off Congress on its present course of attempting to retrieve its traditional role of controller of the pursestrings). Apparently the legality of OMB's actions is to be tested in the courts.

It seems likely that Amtrak will try to hold its own as its two-year experimental period draws to a close. It will reportedly attempt to retain its present number of route-miles, even if it must drop a few poorer-performing routes in the process. Amtrak is forced into this role by the current state of affairs in Washington. But ideally this is the wrong approach. What we should be doing right now is planning for a vast expansion of passenger rail service in the U.S. It has been amply demonstrated that the nation needs and will accept a broad expansion of service. In this year in which the two-millionth person is programmed to die on our highways, it is the least we can do to try to come to grips with our desperate transportation problems. The White House is proposing exactly the opposite--that Amtrak should shrink away and finally die (except for a few corridor trains, of course).

If ever there was a time to write your elected officials, it is now. Congress needs to get on the ball and retrieve its traditional role. After that it shouldn't take much convincing, in light of all the evidence that Amtrak has provided, that the restoration of rail travel in our nation is one of the most vital services that Congress can aid.

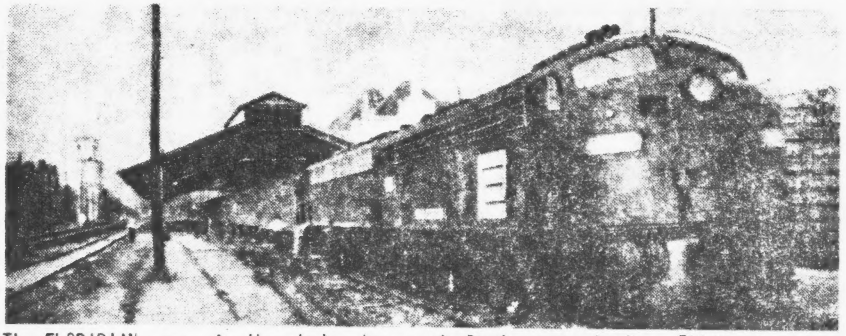
WHITE HOUSE PLANS TO CUT AMTRAK'S FUNDING

Word came out of Washington Jan. 9 that the Nixon administration is severely cutting Amtrak's request for funding for the fiscal year beginning next July 1. The Office of Management and Budget, currently headed by Caspar Weinberger, but soon to be taken over by Roy Ash, has issued a set of guidelines for expansion of Amtrak service, with sharp ceilings on federal subsidies. The White House plans to limit Amtrak's money to somewhere from $50 to $100 million next fiscal year, in comparison to $170 million for the current year. (An additional $9.1 million for the current year, to start up Mexican and San Joaquin Valley service has also been frozen by OMB until after July 1. See RTN, Dec. 18.)

The White House's guidelines would mean that several long-distance routes would have to be dropped (see separate news article). OMB will send its report, containing the guidelines, to Congress by March 15. In reacting to the news, Sen. Vance Hartke of Indiana, chairman of the Senate surface transit subcommittee, said that the cuts "would dismantle passenger service." He charged that OMB is not interested in an effective transportation system. A fight is expected in Congress over the issue.

LONG-DISTANCE PASSENGER TRAIN ROUTES TO BE ELIMINATED

If Amtrak's 1973-1974 budget is cut along the guidelines being drawn up by the White House and the Dept. of Transportation, the most likely routes to be dropped would be those showing the greatest deficit per passenger mile. The New York to Kansas City NATIONAL LIMITED, the Cincinnati to Newport News portion of the GEORGE WASHINGTON/JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY, the Chicago to Florida FLORIDIAN, the Chicago to New Orleans PANAMA LIMITED, and the Chicago to Houston TEXAS CHIEF would be the long distance trains most likely to be dropped.



The FLORIDIAN, seen in the photo above made last summer by Doug Ellis, is one of Amtrak's long-distance trains considered unlikely to survive the White House's ax.

It is said in Washington that "corridor" routes such as Boston-Washington, Chicago-Detroit, and Los Angeles-San Diego are relatively safe from dismemberment. An OMB spokesman said that no firm decision had yet been reached on which rail routes were specified for discontinuance.

SOUTHERN RAILWAY SHOWS MARKED PASSENGER INCREASE

Southern Railway has just announced that passenger counts and revenues on its lines jumped in the 3rd quarter of 1972 to nearly double those for the 4th quarter of 1971, even though the 1971 comparison period includes heavy holiday seasons.

Rail Travel Canada

by Paul Rayton

CONCLUSION

Our final Canadian train was the ESQUIMALT AND NANAIMO Railway RDC from Nanaimo down to the city of Victoria, on Vancouver Island. The E&N is another subsidiary of CP, though not separate enough to warrant its own name on ticket stubs anymore. They use one CP RDC (#9199, 66 seats plus baggage area) that had a plate reading "CAN CAR; Built by Canadian Car Co., Ltd., under license from the Budd Co., U.S.A."

The E&N train makes one round trip each day over a 140-mile route (one way) north from Victoria to Courtenay and return. Our 73-mile ride from Nanaimo

VICTORIA
NANAIMO-COURTENAY

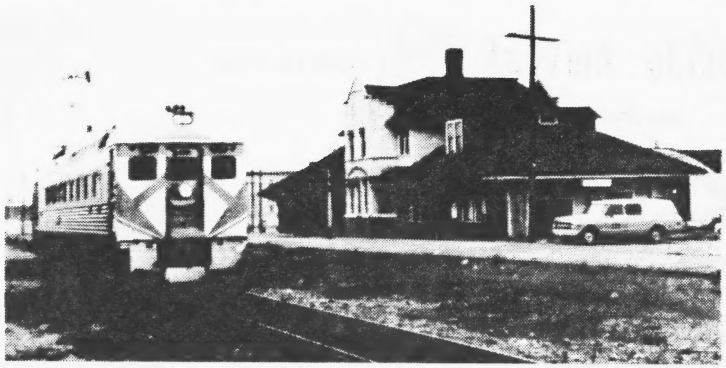
to Victoria took us through the mountainous interior of the island, cresting at some 1000 feet. The interior of this car was the worst I had seen in all of Canada. Old tuna fish cans served as ashtrays, and some upholstery was frayed. According to the Conductor, this was the only passenger car used on the island. If it ever breaks down, it is towed behind a freight engine to meet the schedule. The route is almost continuous curves, and it is laid with only 85 lb. rail, so no speed records are set. The car is never wyed, so all seats face each other in sets of four, so half are always heading forward.

There is a light load (varying between 15 and 25) and much of the traffic is strictly between local points. On time all the way.

This E&N train is convenient to through travelers connecting from the CANADIAN, via a boat from Vancouver to Nanaimo. The stop in Victoria is near the center of the city, and just a few blocks from the boat terminals connecting with U.S. points and also Vancouver.

I find Canadian trains consummately interesting, and for a variety of reasons, some of which should by now be apparent. A few other observations of interest: I noticed a great number of younger people riding the trains, especially on the CN. Train riding doesn't seem to have the stigma that often attaches to it in this country. Youths are not embarrassed or ridiculed when they say they made such and such a trip on the train. Partly this is a product of the Canadian upbringing, but an even larger share of this must be attributed to CN's efforts to promote trains as "now" things, plus the superb interiors of even their oldest equipment. Passengers aren't forced into the feeling that they are riding in a vehicle of another time, another place.

In every coach on the CN, at every seat, attached by a small piece of self-adhesive tape, is a paper litter bag. It does marvels for the interior of the car. I was amazed to walk down the

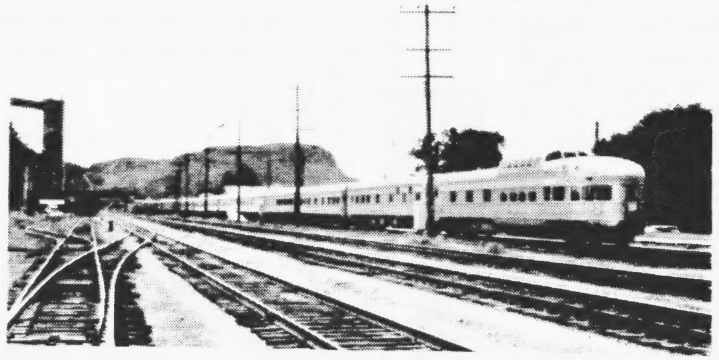


The CP Budd Car at Nanaimo last September 7.

aisles of the SUPER CONTINENTAL as we were nearing Toronto, and there was hardly a paper on the floor.

And once again, what about the low passenger load on the splendid CANADIAN train? Where were all those people who were filling CN's trains? I felt just terrible aboard the CANADIAN because there were so few people riding. What can it be? Has CP's reputed anti-passenger attitude so rubbed off on the people that they subconsciously avoid CP trains? Of course, the most tangible and most important factor is the relative fare structures of the two companies. For our eastbound ride on the CN, from Vancouver to Sydney, comprising some 4006 miles of travel, most of which was by sleeper, cost us a total (family plan) of $398---<u>including</u> most meals---while our trips on CP from St. John through Montreal to Vancouver, a route distance of 3358 miles, cost us $421, <u>exclusive</u> of meals. With such a price differential, the crowds on the CN are somewhat explained. A natural extension, of course, would be to ask why the CP charges so much. This year, in fact, for the first time CP tacked on an extra, summer-peak only surcharge of 50% for bedroom and drawing-room occupancy. My wife and I could have traveled the same distance in two roomettes at a much cheaper rate.

Land of railroading contrasts, land of exciting trains, and visions of how some services might better be operated in this country---that was Canada in 1972.



CP's CANADIAN at Thunder Bay, Ont., Sept. 3.

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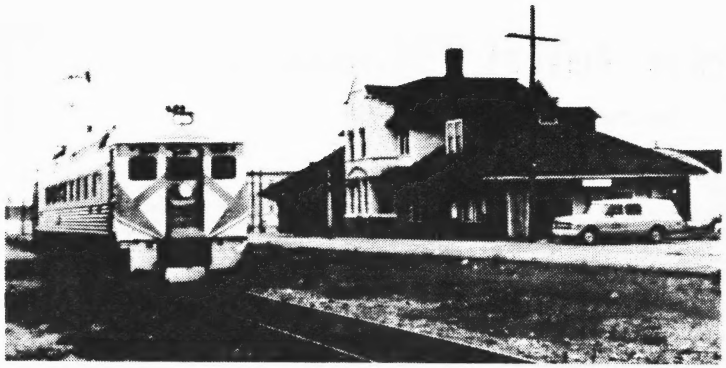

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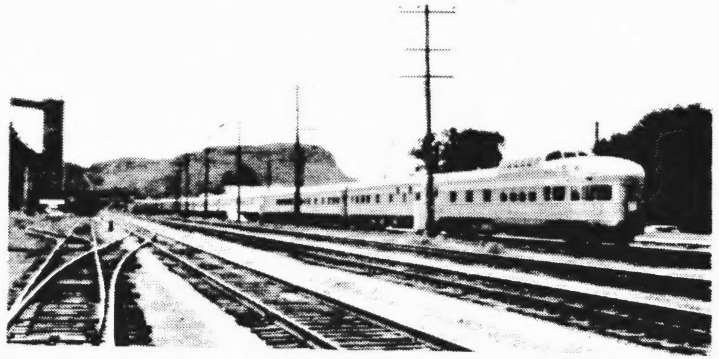
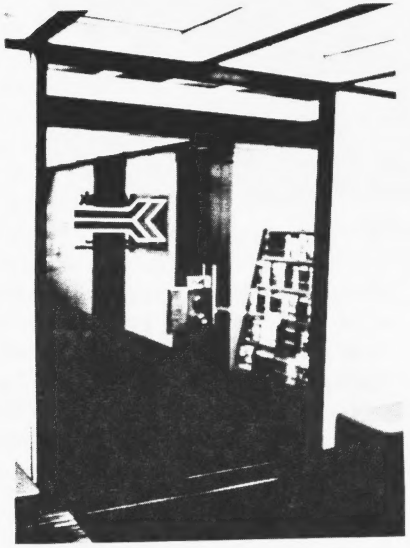


CP's CANADIAN at Thunder Bay, Ont., Sept. 3.

Inside Amtrak

A PICTORIAL ESSAY

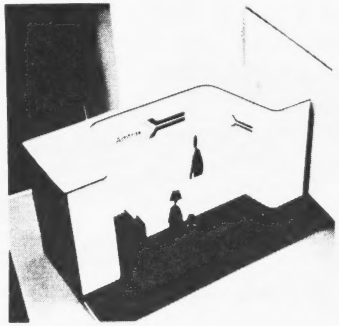
By James Russell



Inside looking out (above left) at Amtrak's main office entrance at the corporation's 955 L'Efant Plaza address in Washington. Display rack of brochures and timetables sits outside glass door.

In photo at upper right, Richard Tower in Amtrak's planning department at work in his small but neat office, engaged in delicate negotiations over a new route. On wall behind is highly detailed railroad map of U.S. Model steam engine paperweight rests on desk in foreground.

Trio of photos at bottom of these pages illustrates varied displays of current and projected Amtrak materials and hardware. At left is a small mockup of an Amtrak sales counter. Center photo shows portion of display in Amtrak's dining car department. At photo's far left are seen new-style white-and-blue china that proved non-durable. To right of bottles of Taylor New York State wines and champagnes are "old" or current types of dining car china. First two from left are EL CAPITAN's California Poppy pattern and SUPER CHIEF's famous Indian design pottery. SUPER CHIEF menu is seen at far right, behind dishes. Photo at far



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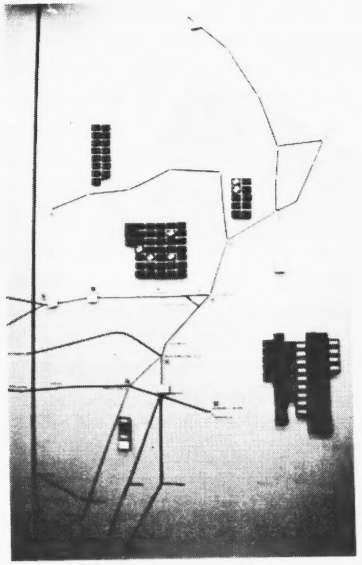
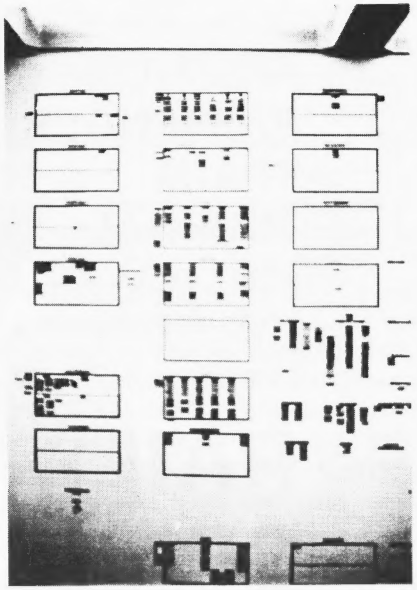
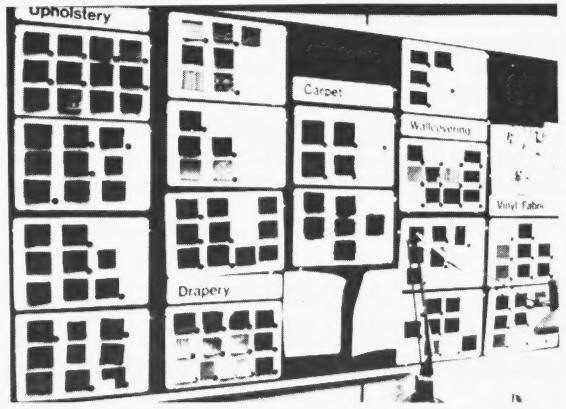




right shows wall display of various types of fabrics used in interior refurbishing of Amtrak rolling stock.

Amtrak's "nerve center" is a small room in which two young men at telephones constantly gather information about operating conditions over the nationwide system. One wall is covered with a hand-drawn Amtrak system map of currently used Amtrak routes (photo above left). Magnets adhering to the map represent trains in operation at a given time. Small Dymo adhesive labels identify the trains. The photo shows the Northeastern portion of the system, with Montreal the point at the extreme top. On the opposite wall (upper right photo) Dymo labels identify each car used by Amtrak and its current location. Boxes drawn on wall indicate particular train consist or shop in which each car is found. Biggest batch of labels was for cars to undergo repair or refurbishing. Control center is quite primitive in comparison to BART control room.



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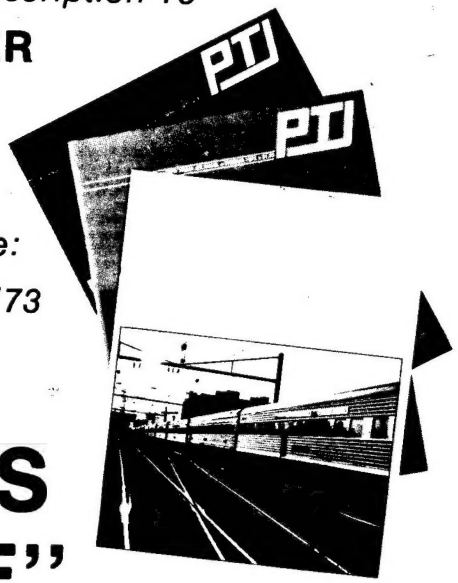

1973 may well be the most important date in the history of American intercity rail passenger service. This is the year in which, for better or worse, the future course of Amtrak will be decided.

PTJ, an advocate of expanded and improved rail service, will devote this issue to the problems we will face if even greater dependence on highways and airways is ordained; what other advanced nations are doing to rebuild and upgrade their rail systems, and why; what the US used to enjoy in the way of rail passenger service and what we could have if even a small fraction of funds going to other modes were used for rails. In short, we plan this to be a definitive work on the crisis facing America.

This issue will be off the press in mid-February. It may well become a collector's item.

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FIRST AMTRAK TRAIN TO MEXICO

Stymied by its own Board of Directors' decision to bypass Dallas, and especially by the Budget Office's announcement that it was freezing the funds voted by Congress to provide the new service, Amtrak is going ahead and starting up a connecting train for Mexico this month, though the corporation is obviously unhappy with the conditions of its operation.

January 19 is the date that the train will first leave Chicago as part of the TEXAS CHIEF (for news of the financial threat to the TEXAS CHIEF, see elsewhere in this issue). The following day it becomes a separate train, as it is detached from the CHIEF at Temple, Texas. From there the train (consisting reportedly of a snack car, one or two coaches and a sleeper) will run on Missouri Pacific track to Laredo, Texas, with stops at Austin, San Marcos, and San Antonio (the San Antonio station will now be open 24hrs a day). Conflicting reports call for a southbound Laredo arrival at either 9:30pm or "at about midnight." There will be an 18-hour layover in Laredo before passengers are bused across the border to board a Mexican train. (U.S. Customs officials refused to allow Amtrak to cross the border with a railroad car without a thorough examination for smuggled marijuana, which would have included tearing out the car upholstery.)

Northbound there is a longer layover, and the train will leave from Laredo at about 5:00am. Tickets for the Mexican portion of the trip must be purchased at the border. The first northbound train will leave Laredo January 21.

Some Texans have nicknamed the new train the "Mexican Jumping Bean" because its route has been changed so frequently. Almost no one seems happy about it, and Amtrak indicates that the arrangement is "temporary." The Arkansas Democrat termed the train "dinky" and said "we are embarrassed that we are demeaning Mexico by giving it poorer service than we are supplying to Canada."

THE PROSPECTS FOR REVIVED SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY TRAINS

A meeting of Caspar Weinberger of the White House Office of Management and Budget, Amtrak's Roger Lewis, Federal Railroad Administrator John Ingram, and a number of California legislators in Fresno Jan. 5 produced some news about the San Joaquin Valley service, the funds for which are currently impounded by Weinberger's office. According to the Sacramento Bee, Weinberger feels that the proposed route--Oakland to Bakersfield with stops at Stockton, Modesto, Merced, Madera, Fresno and Tulare--would be financially feasible, at least more so than some other Amtrak routes. Nevertheless, his office will impound the $516,000 earmarked for the Valley until the end of the fiscal year. At that time, legislators are optimistic that the small sum will be released, so that service can begin. However, it would take 6 weeks to get service going after the money is wrenched out of OMB, so that the summer season will be spent before any trains might be seen running. (In the meantime, ground travellers will have no choice but to use the hazardous highways of the Valley--see RTN, Dec. 18, p. 3.)

NEW TRAIN SONGS AVAILABLE ON RECORD

"Turbo Train" and "The Southern Crescent" are two songs written by M. Earl Eargle (701 Maupas Ave., Savannah, GA 31401) and recorded by the Lucas-Harmon Brothers on a $1.10 record available from the composer, who is Savannah Chairman of the Georgia Association of Railroad Passengers.

WINTER SEASON ON-TIME PERFORMANCE OF WESTERN TRAINS

During the Christmas travel season Dec. 15-Jan. 5, with the COAST STARLIGHT-DAYLIGHT running daily, the expectation was that timekeeping would take a dip, given the known past performance of that train. Here are figures for the period, with "on-time" defined as within 5mins of schedule.

Southbound STARLIGHT (#11-12): 22 trains, 4 of them (18.2%) on time at L.A. Average lateness of the rest: 1 hr 48 mins (range from 10 mins to 4 hrs 47 mins).

Northbound STARLIGHT (#13-14): 22 trains, 7 of them (31.1%) on time at Portland. Average lateness of the rest: 1 hr 19 mins (range from 10 mins to 10 hrs 15 mins, the latter due to a freight derailment at Mt. Shasta Dec. 22; omitting it, the average lateness was 38 mins).

Westbound SUNSET LIMITED (#1): 10 trains, 60% on time at L.A. Average lateness of rest: 2 hrs 27 mins. (Range from 1 hr to 4 hr 35 mins.)

Eastbound SUNSET LIMITED (#2): 10 trains, 30% on time at New Orleans. Average lateness of rest: 2 hr 2 mins (range from 20 mins to 10 hr--the latter due to a freight derailment; passengers were bused to destination. Omitting it, lateness averaged 36 mins.)

Westbound SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR (#5): 10 trains, 20% on time at Oakland. Average lateness of rest: 3 hr 8 mins (range from 10 mins to 8 hr 40 mins).

Eastbound SF ZEPHYR (#6): 10 trains, none on time at Ogden. Average lateness: 1 hr 45 mins (range from 20 mins to 4 hr 35 mins).

DERAILMENT OF THE WASHINGTONIAN

The WASHINGTONIAN, southbound from Montreal, derailed at an open switch at Randolph, VT on Jan. 5. There were 95 passengers in the 8 cars, and the entire train left the track but did not overturn. There were no reported injuries. The engineer said he saw the open switch and was able to slow the train considerably before hitting it. Passengers were bused to New Haven, CT to make train connections there.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"I think we are inclined to let our nostalgia run away with us. If people want cheap transportation, let them ride a bus. There is no place for a passenger train except in an amusement park."

--Bakersfield (CA) City Councilman Walt Heisey, on voting against a resolution calling for restored San Joaquin Valley passenger train service, Dec. 11

"The American people are determined to have rail service, and not more cars. We need more--not fewer--dollars (for passenger train service)."

--Senator Vance Hartke commenting on White House cuts in Amtrak funding this month

"It is precisely the growing national opposition to new freeways and more tens of thousands of acres of airports that Amtrak hopes to turn into support for a modernized rail system that could bring space age whoosh to the one under-utilized American transportation asset, the railroad."

--A.P. newsfeatures Writer John Wheeler, late Dec.

Mixed Train of Thoughts

OUR DECEMBER double issue was mailed by third class mail on January 10, after experiencing several setbacks in publication schedule, including the illness of Paul Rayton while writing his Canada article and the fact that the postal service could not deliver an air mail special delivery letter from Los Angeles to Berkeley in less than four days! We're now almost back on schedule--at least this issue is dated 1973. The issue you're reading is scheduled to be mailed--first class mail--on January 19. The third class mail experiment showed that delivery was not much different from first class, though more erratic. If you get this issue and haven't received the Dec. double issue yet, it's probably still in the mail..... SPEAKING OF the postal service, deliveries to our post office box have just been reduced from six to five a week. No more Saturday mail, but no reduction in box rent.....

* * *

AFTER WRITING up the news items for this issue, we're about ready to have an ulcer. It looks as if we're back to where we were two years ago. And what you can do about it is write your Senators and Congressmen, join the National Association of Railroad Passengers, and write NARP besides. We put a coupon for NARP for your convenience on page 2..... RUMOR REPORTED in the Fast Mail (Jan.) is that Rio Grande may join Amtrak this year, so the S.F.-Chicago train might alternate days between the Colorado and Wyoming routes..... COAST STARLIGHT reverted to tri-weekly operation after Jan. 5, contrary to published reports echoed in RTN (Nov. 20). However, Western Regional Manager Dave Rosier has just announced that it will resume daily operation with Amtrak's next big schedule change in April..... SODDEN THOUGHT (as Herb Caen always says): how many routes will be missing when that next big timetable comes out?..... AMTRAK IS dropping all baggage handling and coach seat reservation charges..... KANSAS CITY Union Station may be built into a general-purpose arena as a means of saving the landmark structure, if present plans work out..... THE POWERS that be are getting a mite worried because Southern Pacific has had no less than 14 freight derailments in Arizona in five months, the most recent happening Jan. 5, killing three crewmen..... PENN CENTRAL strike has been postponed for 2 months. If the strike occurs, it will of course knock out a major portion of the Amtrak system, doing great damage to the corporation's income figures..... TWO ERRORS crept into our flawless Dec. 4 double issue: on page 11 the train pictured is the CP CANADIAN, not the CN SUPER CONTINENTAL; and on page 12, the CN ferry runs every 20 minutes, not every 2 (hope we didn't inconvenience anyone who was expecting more frequent service across the St. Lawrence River).....

* * *

WE'RE READY for a little hilarity about now, so how about this: one sheet of the last RTN got printed in error superimposed on a local church newsletter, and we thus read the following: "At Truro, we changed back to the front of your Bible for the pages that list the OCEAN for the short trip to the books and the page numbers where you will find the books. Turn Inbound to Halifax on this August 31 to the page number given for Isaiah, then turn further to find 1 baggage car, 5 coaches, the 48-seat diner, the sleeper/lounge, 4 sleepers, and a crew car. Finally read verses 1 through 6 in Chapter 60." Do you think this is an omen about what to do for passenger service this year?

Urban-Suburban Transit

PHASE TWO OF BART OPERATIONS TO BEGIN THIS MONTH

The opening of the second portion of the Bay Area Rapid Transit system will occur January 29, when the Oakland-Richmond line goes into operation. This will give about 38 miles of line operating--from Richmond thru Oakland to Fremont, Calif. The new leg consists of elevated line from Oakland's MacArthur station to the Berkeley city limits, where it enters a subway, emerging at the Albany line and continuing as an elevated track thru El Cerrito and onto a surface line at Richmond, where a storage yard is located adjoining the SP tracks. The elevated section thru Albany and El Cerrito parallels the present Santa Fe right-of-way.

In other news, BARTmade known early this month that it has apparently solved its problem of erratic automatic train control. Train wheels would gather oxidation and have difficulty establishing firm electrical contacts that tell the control equipment of the presence of a train on the tracks. By mounting "scrubbers" on the trains to polish the rotating wheels, BART apparently is now able to prevent the film from building up.

A PLAN FOR UPGRADING SP PENINSULA COMMUTE SERVICE

For less than $75 million, says W. Scott McGilvray, General Manager of West Bay Railway of San Francisco, SP's peninsula commute service could be upgraded to provide a "viable mass transit line" for San Mateo County, without the expense of a BART extension. Three improvements are proposed: $1 million for improved express bus service in downtown San Francisco and to connect S.F. Airport with the Millbrae train station; $20 million for new locomotives and cars; $50 million to extend the present tracks to Market Street, closer to downtown San Francisco, to provide connections to BART and Muni streetcars. By contrast with this plan, a BART extension would cost $900 million and take ten years to build, McGilvray says.

A LOOK AT TRANSIT PLANS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

The Southern California Rapid Transit District is looking at present railroad lines in the Los Angeles area for the feasibility of setting up commuter train service on one or more of them. Under particular consideration is a plan to establish a commuter line from Santa Ana on the south to Chatsworth on the north, using SP's Coast Line and Santa Fe's San Diego Line, going thru L.A. Union Station.

TRANSIT NEWS BRIEFS:

SP commute trains are making special stops at Bay Meadows racetrack in San Mateo during the Harness races which are run until March 3... New Jersey Governor Cahill announced Jan. 9 that the state's three independent toll road authorities have agreed to merge into a single agency with excess money being put into mass transit... No progress is being made in the continuing Long Island Rail Road strike...

The Environmental Protection Agency is proposing gasoline rationing in much of Southern California to tackle the smog problem... Chicago Transit Authority buses and trains will get a 5¢ fare increase and reduced service February 1... Jan. 12 the Jersey Central R.R. got a promise of additional state subsidies to keep its commuter service running 2 months beyond the threatened Jan. 21 cutoff date...

(Continued from page 2)

right along and made up several minutes into N.Y. I made a fast change to the outbound NATIONAL. It left on time with 10 cars, all of the coaches jammed. It was standing room only between Newark and North Philadelphia, in fact.

It was apparent that Amtrak had rented some equipment, as it has in the past, to handle the peak traffic. Those mainstays of the PRR in years gone by, the tuscan red heavyweight P-70 coaches were in use between N.Y. and Philadelphia. The former lightweight long-distance cars bought by New Jersey for suburban service were also spotted. And I believe I saw a set of Jersey Arrow cars (the new MU's bought for use between N.Y. and Trenton) being used to fill a Philadelphia-N.Y. run.

Kenneth A. Maylath

Baltimore, Md.

Friday, Dec. 22, the PRAIRIE STATE rolled out of Milwaukee right at (groan) 6:10 (yawn) a.m. I had an excellent breakfast in an Amtrakked diner, and then, as the sky lightened, I dome-sat for a while. It's a pretty good operation, and both Milwaukee Road and GM&O know how to run diners.

At St. Louis I changed to the NATIONAL LTD, which arrived there 25mins late, left 50mins late, and arrived North Philadelphia 3hrs (Three Hours) late. It had two sleepers, one I think mostly for dorm space, one ex-NYC grill diner, and 4 coaches, which were packed (Packed). At Pittsburgh two more coaches were added, also full.

In the morning only 18 grill seats were available, the other 24 seats in the diner being used for coach passengers. The diner was running out of everything. Rather than a METROLINER connection, the first section of the SOUTHERN CRESCENT (coaches, mostly NH vintage 1948, which rode well and quietly, and a candlelight snack car) stopped, so I got to Washington 4hrs late. My brother had been waiting 4hrs, since Washington had no information.

The return trip on the BROADWAY LTD was excellent. I find it hard to believe that the same road (PC) and the same organization (Amtrak) operate both the BROADWAY and the NATIONAL. I can only believe that Amtrak and Penn Central are out to kill the NATIONAL.

George H. Drury

Milwaukee, Wisc.

I quote from RTN (Vol. 2, No. 20) "No explanation was given for the drop (in income) on IC's PANAMA LTD route." I think someone overlooked an important fact: In July-Sept. 1971 the IC was running the CITY OF NEW ORLEANS, whereas now the overnight PANAMA LTD is running. As we all know, on May 1, 1971 Amtrak selected the CITY schedule over the PANAMA's. Now that we know revenues are down, why not put back the CITY and drop the PANAMA (which was originally intended)?

Let's all join Arlo Guthrie and sing "The City of New Orleans" and maybe it will re-appear in Kentucky during the mid-afternoon instead of 1:30 in the morning!

Donald O. Clayton

Madisonville, Ky.

ANNUAL CHRONOLOGY OF RAIL EVENTS COMING UP!

The next (Jan. 15) issue of RTN will carry our annual chronology of rail travel events--a comprehensive listing of the important happenings of the year 1972. Don't miss it!